

The Nature and Mischiefs of Hypocrisy.

A 1508/1086 X

SERMON

Preach'd at the

A S S I Z E S,

B E F O R E

Mr. Justice B L E N C O W E,

A N D

Mr. Justice G O U L D,

A T

St. M A R Y's Church in Oxford,

July the Fifteenth, 1708.

P S A L M lxxviii. 37.

*For their Heart was not Right with him, neither were they
Stedfast in his Covenant.*

By JOHN WILLETT, M.A. Fellow of Wadham-College.

Publsh'd at the Request of the High-Sheriff and Grand-Jury.

L O N D O N:

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TO BURLACE WARREN, Esq;
HIGH-SHERIFF of the County of OXFORD:

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Joseph Sadler, Gent.
Richard Leaver, Gent.
Thomas Thackham, Gent.

With the rest of the Gentlemen of the GRAND-JURY.

Gentlemen !

THE Principles and Practices in this Discourse consider'd, are universally Condemn'd by the Best and Wisest Men in all Ages; being as Repugnant to good Sense, as they are to Sound Religion. For however Shifting and Doubling, in Matters of the last Importance, have been Disguis'd and Set off, under the Specious Character of a Trimmer; as if He that was on neither Side, was the Surest Friend to the Right: Yet your Unshaken Loyalty to your Prince, our Most Excellent QUEEN, and Constant Zeal for the Church of England, for which you are so Eminent; is now a Living, and ever will be an Undeniable Testimony; that Gentlemen of the Best Characters, Estates, and Families, can never Consent to such a Neutrality, as wou'd Weaken Her Interests: or own such a Moderation, as wou'd Expose Her to Her Enemies.

The Boat indeed, according to their own Metaphor, ought to be kept Upright and Steddy: But the way to do it, is to be So: nor can it, in the mean time, be Deny'd, that frequent Changing of Sides is most likely to put it into a Tottering Condition.

Gentlemen !

The Honour you have done this Discourse in Requesting its Publication, laid me under a Necessity of doing One of those Two things, to which I solemnly protest, I have the Utmost Aversion; either of Appearing in Print; or Disobliging so many Great and Worthy Persons: But when I had a little Consider'd the Matter; I soon determin'd, That I cou'd not well scruple the Staking my own Reputation, since I had the Security of so Considerable a Protection. I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your Most Obedient, and
Most Humble Servant,

JOHN WILLETT.



PSALM LXXVIII. 37.

For their Heart was not Right with him, neither were they Stedfast in his Covenant.

IN this Psalm we have an Account of an Obstinate, Impious, and Ungrateful Nation. A Nation rais'd up and sustain'd by Miracles, tho' never Reclaim'd or Better'd by them: Neither Mercies nor Judgments cou'd bring them to Repentance; Blessings and Deliverances serv'd but to increase their Licentiousness; and all the Wonders God had wrought for them they desperately improv'd into so many Arguments for their Infidelity. Thus with great Impatience and Ingratitude they Impiously Expostulate with *Moses*, immediately after that Consummate and Heart-piercing Miracle, of Slaying all the First-born, *Exod. XIV. 11.* *Because there were no Graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to Die in the Wilderness: wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?* And again, at the 20th Verse of this Psalm, *He smote the stony Rock, that the Waters gush'd out, and the Streams flow'd withal:* But tho' the Miracle was so sensible, and the Evidence of God's Almighty Power so Glaring, yet it cou'd not pierce their stony Hearts; for they add, *Can he give Bread also? Can he provide Flesh for his People?* And notwithstanding all the Miracles he had wrought before their Eyes in Egypt; and, which was the greatest of all, Completed their Deliverance, by the Ruin and Destruction of a most Powerful and Insolent Tyrant; Yet for all this they Sinned more against him, by Provoking the most Highest in the Wilderness, *Psalm 78. 17.*

But since Mercies and Deliverances had no Effect upon them, God, by a yet greater Instance of his Mercy, was resolv'd to try them by Afflictions: and so he gave them over into the Hand of their Enemies, and made them a Prey to the Insolence and Cruelty of their Oppressors; Distracted 'em with Intestine Commotions; Wasted 'em with Famine, and Pestilence; to see if Calamities wou'd reduce 'em to Consideration, melt their Harden'd Hearts, and bring them to a Sense of their Ingratitude and Provocations. Now this Method wrought so far upon them, as to make 'em put on the Guise or Appearance, at least, of Humiliation and Repentance: For, *When he slew them, then they sought him, and turn'd them early and enquir'd after God: And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer, v. 34, 35.* And yet there was nothing of Reality at the bottom of all this; all their Professions of Sorrow and Amendment, were but Superficial and in Appearance; *For they did but Flatter him with their Mouth, and Lied unto him with their Tongues, For their Heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his Covenant.* The Original Word signifies, and so do the LXX render it, that their Heart, *ἐκ ἐὐθείας μετ' αὐτοῦ, non rectum erat apud eum,*

it was under a wrong Bias and Direction; their Affections and Inclinations were not towards God; but rooted and fixt on this World: and this was the cause of their so frequent Backsliding and Apostacy. They wou'd fain have Divided between the True Religion and Idolatry; have Reconcil'd *Egypt* with *Canaan*; and a Molten Calf with the Holy One of *Israel*; and therefore, as it follows, *They were not stedfast in his Covenant.* They frequently Transgress'd his Laws, especially those against Idolatry, which by the Covenant made with their Fore-fathers, they were bound to Observe. Which Words represent to us the Nature, and Evil Effects or Mischiefs of *Hypocrisy*: the Nature of it in these Words, *Their Heart was not right with him*; or, as the Old Translation well expresses it, was not whole with him. The Mischiefs in those that follow; *Neither were they stedfast in his Covenant.* The One implies a Vice or corrupt Habit of the Mind: the Other imports the Exercise of it in our Lives and Actions. In speaking therefore to this Subject, I shall

First, Give you an Account of the Nature of *Hypocrisy* in general.

Secondly, I shall propose some Instances, whereby we may discover the Notorious and Woful Effects of it.

Thirdly, I shall offer some Motives to Perswade us to an Open, Free, and Undisguis'd Behaviour, especially in Matters of Religion.

I. First, I'm to give an Account of the Nature of *Hypocrisy* in general.

Now Dissimulation, with respect to Religion, has almost entirely engross'd the Name of *Hypocrisy*; so that whenever we hear the Word *Hypocrite*, we generally understand One, that Dissembles with God and Religion. He that Prevaricates with Men, is stiled a Flatterer, a Parasite, or a Dissembler: But he that Disguises himself before God Almighty, and endeavours to appear otherwise than he really is; such a One, in a peculiar, and the most opprobrious Sence, is call'd an *Hypocrite*. Now *Hypocrisy*, in this sence, is a Vice, which our Lord has not only Loaded with the most bitter and severest Expressions of his Hatred and Indignation; but has assign'd it a worse Place, and higher degrees of Punishment, than he has allotted to any other Sins. So that when he wou'd represent the Punishment of the Greatest and most Desperate Villany in any Person, he tells us, that *He shall have his portion with the Hypocrites and Unbelievers, there shall be Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth*, Matth. 24. 51. But I need not use many Words to shew how Odious *Hypocrisy* is in the Sight of God, in order to render it more Despleasing to Men, For tho' Insincerity, Flattery, and Dissimulation, have gain'd such an universal Reputation, as to become the most Fashionable Accomplishments of the Age; yet the World has generally given its Suffrage against *Hypocrisy*, as the Basest, most Unmanly, and most Detestable of all Vices. And we shall soon perceive that it is so, if we consider a little the Nature of it. Now the Nature of it is fully compriz'd in these Two Positions, which the different Translations afford us:

First, That their Heart was not Right with God.

Secondly, That it was not Whole with him. For in both these Cases a

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Man is Guilty of *Hypocrisy*: either when his Heart is not Right towards God, or when it is not Whole with him; when he has set his Affections on any thing besides him; or admits an inferior Object to a Share of them.

First, A Man is Guilty of *Hypocrisy*, when his Heart is not Right with God: When his Affections and Inclinations are under a Bias and Direction opposite to him; which is very appositely express'd by the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 29. v. 13. *This People draw near me with their Mouth, and with their Lips do they honour me, but have remov'd their Heart far from me*; and by *Ezekiel*, Chap. 33. v. 31. *For with their Mouth they shew much Love, but their Heart goes after Covetousness*. If the Stream of a Man's Affections is bent towards inferior Objects; if he can Love, Desire, or Enjoy, nothing but corporeal and sensible Good; tho' at the same time he approaches God as his only Happiness; if his Treasure and his Heart are in the Earth, when he lifts up his Hands and Eyes to Heaven; then belongs to him that infamous Character, which the Psalmist fixes on the *Jews*, viz. *That their Heart was not Right with him*. Now *Hypocrisy* in this sense, as it imports an Alienation of the Soul from God, disposes a Man either to Infidelity, or Idolatry; either entirely to Forget the Creator, or to Worship and Serve the Creature above him. This is a Disease that so strongly infected the *Israelites*, and was the Cause of their great Inconstancy and frequent Defection, as 'tis fully related in this Psalm. But a Man is Guilty of *Hypocrisy*, when in the

Second Place, His Heart is not *whole* with God, when he permits any thing besides to have a Share of it. Such a One directs his Aims two ways, and is divided betwixt God and this World. He professes an ardent Desire of Heaven and Happiness, but is not willing to part with his present Enjoyments. He beseeches God to grant him Spiritual, but not as inconsistent with Temporal, Blessings. The *Israelites* were pleas'd well enough to hear of the Milk and Honey of the Promis'd Land; but then they cou'd not but remember the Flesh-pots, the Onions, and Garlick of *Egypt*. Now Hypocrites in both these Cases, must be under the highest degree of Fascination. The One, to think that a God of Infinite Knowledge, Wisdom, and Holiness, can take delight in a bare Outside, Corporeal Service; that he can be pleas'd with the labour of the Lips, and lifting up of the Hands, whilst the Heart is Offer'd up at another Altar. No; such a Formal, Lifeless Oblation, will no more be Accepted by him, than a Sacrifice without a Heart, which he has pronounc'd Abominable in his sight. Nor is the Other less Absurd and Impious, to suppose that the Lord of Heaven and Earth will Divide with his Creatures, and be a Sharer only in the Hearts and Affections of those that entirely belong to him. Absurd it is, in the highest degree, to imagine that he will Compound for a Part, where the Whole is so justly due: and no less Impious also, to endeavour to Defraud and Impose upon him, *Who searches the Heart, and tries the Reins, and will render to every Man according to his Work*. And yet as Absurd and Impious as it is, this is truly the Case of the Hypocrite;

pocrite; either his Heart is not Right, or Whole, with God: his Affections are either in the Whole, or in Part, Devoted to another Object, Directed to another Happiness, his Aims and Endeavours tend to a different Point. Thus is it with those who Serve God, for the sake of *Mammon*; and pay Attendance at his Altar, only to get by it. In like manner; Ambition makes Men Liberal and Popular; Avarice, Temperate and Parsimonious; Vain-Glory, Hospitable and Beneficent. So that *Hypocrisy*, you perceive, is the Reverse and Opposite of Truth, and Sincerity: For as Sincerity is the Life, the Substance, and Reality of Religion and Virtue; *Hypocrisy* destroys the very Being and Essence of both. It is a Cancer that Eats thro' the Heart of all Vertues, and reduces all Religion to a meer insignificant Phantom. It's like a Corrupt Humour in the Body, that not only changes all the rest into its own Complexion, but continually Preys upon and Exhausts 'em. So that its malign Influence reaches as far as Virtue it self, and strikes at the very Root and Foundation of it. We must therefore run thro' the whole Catalogue of Vertues, if we wou'd view it in all its Shapes and Colours, and form a comprehensive Idea of it. But this is a Subject too great for the Limits of this Discourse. However, that we may have yet a more distinct and clear Conception of it, let us consider it, not only in the general Idea or Habit; but also in the Exercise and Effects of it: Let us view it in the several Examples that present themselves to our Daily Observation; which was the Second Thing I propos'd to Discourse of, *viz.*

II. *Secondly*, To propose some Instances whereby we may Discover the Notorious and Woful Effects of it.

I. The First Instance of *Hypocrisy* as too Notorious in the World, is in those, who Change their Religion with the Times, and will be Sure to be of that which is Uppermost; who always fall in with a Majority, and follow the Multitude to the House of God. These Men measure Truth by Numbers; and take the Voice of the People, than which nothing is generally more Erroneous, for the Oracles of God.

This is certainly a Grand piece of *Hypocrisy*, to play thus fast and loose with Religion; to make it a Stalking Horse to our Interest; and to Court it under all the Differing and Wretched Shapes, that the Wild and Unaccountable Humour of a *Successful Fashion* shall Dress it up in.

As if it were not our Duty to be like God Himself, (as far as the Imperfection of Human Nature will permit) who is as Immutable in his Will, as He is in his Nature.

As if He had not given us a Rule of Faith, and settled the Measures of our Duty; and the Holy Scriptures did not sufficiently Instruct us, in what we ought to Believe and Do, in order to our Eternal Salvation.

As if Truth was not, like the Author of it, always the same; and might be Chang'd by the Interests and Humours of Sinful Men.

As if God had not given us an Understanding to Discern Truth from Falshood, and Reason to Guide us in the pursuit of it, when discover'd.

And

And can there now be a greater Instance of Insincerity than this, to pretend to be like unto God Himself, and to Imitate Him in this His most Glorious, I might, not very improperly add, His most Essential Perfection, of Constancy and Immutability; when it is our Daily, our Utmost, Endeavour to Conform ourselves to the Likeness of Men, in their most Degenerate and Reproachful Imperfections, Mutability and Inconstancy?

Can there be a greater Instance of a Corrupt and Deceitful Heart, a False and Hypocritical Profession, than to pretend to give up ourselves, to be Guided by God's Holy Word, and the Influences of His Blessed Spirit, when we never Comply with One, nor Consult the Other; but found our Principles on our Interest, and measure the Goodness of them only by Success? When a Man considers not what is most Agreeable to the Word of God, but what is most Pleasing to Men, in the Business of his Profession; when a Man forsakes those Fountains of Living Water, those Sacred Repositories of All saving Truth, those Eternal Maxims of Good and Evil, those Establish'd Rules of Just and Unjust, Honest and Dishonest, for the False, Uncertain, and Deceitful Measures of Worldly Policy and Interest. To proceed—

Is it not a Notorious Instance of Insincerity and Deceitfulness, as well as a Reproachful Abuse of Reason, to pretend to be Govern'd and Directed by it, and yet Basely and Shamefully submit it to the Humour, Caprice, and Giddiness of a *Party*? Instead of following the Dictates of Conscience, to be continually Dragg'd about wheresoever a *Faction* shall lead us; to suffer our Reason to be Moulded and Turn'd into all Shapes by the *Multitude*; to lay our selves open to all Impressions; and Embrace That only for Truth, which is most in Fashion, and in highest Esteem: And yet in the mean-time to make large Professions of Conscience and Reason in all our Proceedings? This, certainly, is as Horrid an Abuse of those Sacred Names, as it is a Scandalous Instance of *Hypocrisy*.

And so is it, *Lastly*, when we make a shew of great Zeal and Love for Truth, and that we would never Desert it, if we cou'd but arrive to it; when at the same time, we stand by it no longer than it is able to Advance us; when we Embrace or Forsake it, as it rises or falls in the Esteem of the World. But let such Men know, that Truth is of a fix and inflexible Nature; it is not to be ry'd down to the sordid Maxims of *Great Statesmen*, or *Crafty Politicians*; or Banded about to different Sides, as they chance to get the Better of each other: And whoever is ready to Comply with every Set of Principles, as they come to be in Vogue and Repure; and to fall in with the Stream wheresoever it shall carry him, has no more Indifference in his Judgment than Sincerity in his Heart: whosoever his Pretences may be, he has no true Zeal or Concern for Truth; and is as far from a just and impartial Enquiry, as he is from a stedfast Adherence to it. But,

2. *Secondly*, Another Notorious Instance of Insincerity in Religious Matters, or *Hypocrisy*, is in Those who openly Profess one Religion, and yet secretly Wish well to another; who own themselves Members of the

Church of England, and yet are link'd in a Confederacy against Her: who hold Constant Communion with Her, but keep a Clandestine Correspondence with Her Enemies: who seem to like Her Constitution well enough, and yet give in to the same Measures, which our most irreconcilable Adversaries have made use of to Ruin Her. To make this Evident by an Instance or two.

Such are they who misrepresent the Terms of Communion between the *Church of England* and the *Presbyterians*. They alledge, that the Difference between Us and Them, is about Trivial, Indifferent Matters, in which the Essence and Vitals of Religion are no way concern'd. Now, with regard to the *Dissenters*, We own that the Terms of Communion required of them, are about Small Inconsiderable Things; and therefore, they have but a short Step to make in order to an Accommodation with us. For they do not deny the Lawfulness of *Episcopacy*, or a Form of Prayer: All the Quarrel is about a few Ceremonies, which they cannot but own to be in their own Nature Inoffensive and Indifferent. But we greatly mistake these Persons, if we thus Understand 'em. 'Tis the *Church of England* they aim at, when they say that the Difference is Small between It and Them; and that the Distance is inconsiderable which Divides Us from Them. It must be confess'd indeed, if we measure it by the Lengths these Men have gone, it is so: For there is nothing Profess'd in our Church, except the Articles of Faith, which they look upon to be Essential and Immutable. All besides, in their Opinion, are but the Circumstantial of Religion, which, by the Consent of all Sides, may be Alter'd and Abolish'd at pleasure. In Answer to which Suggestion we say; that we have a Government in the Establish'd Church, which is deriv'd from Christ and His Apostles; a Discipline Authoriz'd by the most Famous Councils and Churches in the World; a Liturgy truly Primitive, Rational, and Edifying: and these are not such *Small Things*, as may lightly be Sacrific'd to the Unreasonable Humour of those who dislike 'em. We must lay a Great Stress upon them, as Things of the Utmost Importance to the Being and Edification of the Church; and no Union or Peace can be a sufficient Compensation for them. Let Us therefore, in a word or two, see on what Terms we stand with our Dissenting Brethren of the *Presbyterian* Perswasion. They have but a Little to yield Us, a few Innocent Ceremonies, which they can never prove to be Unlawful: but We have a Great deal to lose to them, which they never can prove not to be Necessary. It is but a little way for Them to come over to Us: but We must go a great way to come to Them. They Esteem *Episcopacy* not to be Unlawful, and so may easily Comply with it: We think it Necessary and Immutable, as of Divine Institution, and cannot therefore part with it. A Small share of Temper and Modesty wou'd bring Them over to Us: but without the Violation of our Oaths, Consciences, and Trusts, We cannot come down to Them. And yet those our *Comprehensive Friends* wou'd Insinuate, by *their way* of stating the Terms of Communion, that all *Charity* and *Moderation* lies on the side of the *Dissenters*; and that We,

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ft Her: not They, continue the *Separation*, by a Perverse, Unreasonable Adhe-
Corre- nce to things of no Moment.

on well Thus do They join with Our Enemies also, in Disputing and Exploding
recon- the Ancient Doctrines of the Church, which have been the Bulwarks,
his Evi- as 'twere, not only to Distinguish but Defend Us from Them; the Di-
vine Right of *Episcopacy* has been unquestionably made out, and univer-
sally Asserted by all Sound and Orthodox Writers: not a *Mediate* Right,
as the *Church of Rome* holds; as if all the Authority of a *Bishop* was
deriv'd *immediately* from the *Pope*: nor an *Approving* or *Arbitrary*
Right, such as makes the Authority Discretionary and Mutable; as some
moderate *Calvinists* allow; but an Essential, Fundamental, Indefeasible
Right; such as is *immediately* deriv'd from our Lord Jesus Christ, the
Head of the *Church*, the *Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls*. And yet
how often do we hear this *Doctrine* call'd in Question, and even given
up by some *False Brethren*? They make it a matter Indifferent whether
We have *Episcopacy* among us or no; denying that such a Pre-eminence
of Authority, is at all Necessary in the *Church of Christ*; and that it is
therefore in the Power of the *Civil Magistrate* to Remove it, and Substi-
tute *Presbytery*, or any other Government, in the room of it.

This is a Position that has not lurk'd in *Corners* or private *Cabals*;
but has been openly and avowedly Maintain'd by Those that are not bare-
ly Members of the *Church of England*. For what else can they mean,
when they Level and Confound the Government of the *Church*, with the
Modes of Worship; Affirming *equally* of them, that they are only the
Circumstantials of Religion; and Blame Us therefore for being so Stiff
and Zealous in the Defence of them? Sure we may lay aside those
small and Worthless Things, for the sake of Peace, Unity, and Charity:
and Persons that are found to be of an Unyielding Temper in these
Points, are Branded with *Inodiating* Characters, and Charg'd with a *Fu-
rious, Exterminating Zeal*; and ever now and then the *Romish Inquisi-
tion*, and the *Zealots of Jerusalem* are introduc'd to finish the Cha-
racter.

And now I wou'd fain know what Our Adversaries themselves cou'd
desire more from these Men, had they entirely Declar'd for Them?
These are the Weapons which the stoutest Champions of the *Dissenters*
have always made use of against the *Church*; but having been hitherto
repuls'd, they have Prevail'd with Our *Allies*, Our *Brethren*, to take
them up against Us. Nay, there's scarce any One Argument made use of
by the *Dissenters*, against Our Constitution, which these Our *Pretended
Friends* do not continually urge against it. And is not this now Acting
most False and Treacherous Part, to be perpetually Gallling and Wor-
rying Us in our Own Camp, and within our Own Walls? And what the
Consequences of such a procedure may be, Themselves would do well
to consider. But to return; this we are all Assur'd of, that Government
Essential and Necessary to the Being of a *Church*, (for there can be no
Church or *Society* without it) and therefore, 'tis not to be reckon'd a-
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mongst the Circumstantials or Modes of Religion. Shall We then tamely Surrender *that* which has such undeniable Evidences of a Divine Appointment; has been handed down to us, by an uninterrupted Succession from the very Apostles; and so bravely Defended by the Greatest Men in all Ages? Shall We, did I say? 'Tis not in our Power to do it; it is God's own Ordinance and Institution; and We, who are under the most Solemn Engagements, to Assert and Maintain it, cannot Desert it, without Perfidiousness and Cowardise.

I'm aware, it may here be suggested, that this is in effect to Condemn the Reformed Churches, which are not Govern'd by Bishops. In Answer to which we say; that Asserting the Doctrines of our Church, is not Condemning those who Differ from us. The Compilers of our Liturgy and Rubrick hold the Doctrine of Episcopacy, yet take not upon them to Condemn those Churches that want it. If it be said, that this however is to Condemn them by Implication and by Consequence: I answer; We must not be afraid to Own and Profess the Articles of our Faith, and the Doctrines of our Church, for fear of Displeasing those that Deny them. The Church indeed in Asserting the Doctrine of Episcopacy, uses great Caution and Tenderness, lest Foreign Churches shou'd be Offended at a peremptory and fruitless Determination in the case: yet notwithstanding she does Assert it, and Maintain that it is founded both on Scripture and Antiquity. And if our Church does Teach and Defend it; why shou'd not we? We ought indeed to Imitate her in Temper and Candor; but we are bound no less to Follow her in her Fidelity and Integrity.

Again; Can we give up our Liturgy, which prescribes a grave, decent, rational and Spiritual Worship; which is fram'd in all Points after the Primitive Pattern, and is so admirably suited to the Capacity and Edification of all sorts of People; and which the Protestants Abroad so much Admire, that they are about to introduce it into their own Churches? Wou'd not our Coldness and Disaffection be a Discouragement and Hindrance to so excellent a Work? Can we expect that other Churches shou'd Comply and Unite with us in *that*, which we so little regard, that we are ready to part with it on all Occasions? Nothing can be more effectual, under God, to the Composing our sad Divisions at Home, than such an happy Union with the Churches Abroad: and nothing will so effectually put a stop to the Approaches of such a Blessing, as want of Zeal and Constancy in Maintaining that excellent Form of Worship we wou'd Recommend to them. 'Tis in vain to Hope we shall Reduce the Dissenters by Condescensions: He must be little acquainted with former Transactions, that can entertain such a Thought: For 'tis abundantly Evident from the best Accounts, and even our own Observation, that they aim not at the Satisfaction of their Scruples, so much as *Dominion*; and Quarrel not so much with your *Constitution*, as with your *Revenues* and *Power*. If any thing will bring them to Consideration and their Duty, it must be the Shame and Scandal of Holding out, when so many Indifferent and Impartial Enquirers of their own Perswasion Abroad, are come

over

over to us. What then can those Men mean, who are ever for Giving, Complying, and Condescending to the Dissenters? As if our Constitution was so excellently fram'd, only to be Torn in pieces, and Retail'd to every importunate Faction, that shou'd have the Confidence to Demand a share of it?

Does it not rather become them, who pretend to be Sound and Orthodox Members of the Church, faithfully to Adhere to it, and zealously Defend it? Impartially to enquire into its Constitution, in order to silence the Cavils, and suppress the Clamours of Perverse and Unreasonable Men. To endeavour, at least to shew'em, That the Government of the Church by Bishops, is truly Primitive, Apostolical and Divine; That its Liturgy is agreeable in all Points to the most Ancient Forms; and that tho' it was never pretended to be entirely Perfect, so as not to be capable of Improvement in any Part of it: (And where was there ever any thing purely Human that was so?) yet certainly some small Imperfections may be born with, for the sake of Unity, Peace and Order; and to prevent that Confusion, and Distraction, that must necessarily arise from frequent Changes: especially when they are made upon weak and uncertain Grounds; brought about by unreasonable and restless Importunities; and when Prejudice, Interest, and Ambition, are the first Movers, and chiefest Promoters of them. That 'twou'd be as Unreasonable for every One to expect Satisfaction, or to have every Thing suited to his own Opinion, in the Ecclesiastical Constitution, as the Civil: That seeming Imperfections must necessarily be born in the One, as well as the Other: And that therefore continual Clamours for a Reformation, and Dissentions for the want of it, are signs of a Seditious and Turbulent Spirit; and as Dangerous to the Church, as they wou'd be to the State. That in the Administration of the Government, and Affairs of the Church, namely, Of its Rites, Orders, and Ceremonies, a Private Man is no more to Judge for himself, than he is in the Administration of Civil Affairs; but must acquiesce in the Wisdom and Determination of his Superiors. In Matters of Faith indeed a Man must Judge for himself, otherwise his Faith cannot be Reasonable: but 'tis not about these that the *Dissenters* Differ with us. but in Things relating to the Good Government of the Church, and the Decent and Orderly Regulation of God's Worship, according to the Apostolical Injunction; in these a Private Man is bound, by the Laws of God, to Obey the Commands, and Observe the Orders of his Superior.

Wou'd all Church-Men take such Methods as these, instead of Countenancing and Complying with our Adversaries, it wou'd probably have a better Effect upon them; and contribute more to the Healing our Breaches, than all the Concessions the Government can make them: I'm sure 'twou'd conduce more to the Peace, Honour, and Establishment of the Church, and preserve Union and Charity among our Selves; and they that are not heartily concern'd to promote these, whilst they Profess themselves Members of it; if they are not Treacherous *Hypocrites*, 'tis because they really Deserve a Worse Name.

But

But there is yet a

3. Third sort of *Hypocrites* behind ; and those are such, as upon the prospect of Interest or Advantage, will Comply with what themselves Condemn : They deny our Worship to be Lawful, and yet will join in the Highest Acts of it, when a Place of Honour or Profit invites 'em. They can observe a great deal of Impurity, and Corruption in our Service, but are not in the least afraid of Defiling Themselves with it. when the Splendor of a Good and Profitable Place Recommends it. Now This I'm certain, in the Primitive Times, wou'd have been Condemn'd for downright *Hypocrisy*, and Punish'd with the severest Censures. But our Refin'd, and Sanctify'd Age will by no means allow of such a Hard Term. Nay, some will have it to be a *Vertue* ; as proceeding from a Largeness of Soul, and Freedom of Thought ; and that such a Man has a *Great and Comprehensive* Charity. Yes indeed he has, *Great and Comprehensive* enough to be a *Deist*, a *Socinian*, or of any other Religion, that happens to be on the Side of his Interest. For what shou'd hinder him ? *Conscience* ? No ; because that tells him our Liturgy is Impure and Unlawful, and yet he will comply with it for his Advantage : And if *Conscience* cannot restrain him, when his Interest invites ; I know not any thing that can. But he's no *Hypocrite* however, says a late Celebrated Author, (the Great Champion of *Dissenters* and *Occasional Conformists*,) notwithstanding he acts contrary to his Judgment or Conscience. Why ? Because, says he, he is not *Conscious* * to himself that it is *Hypocrisy*. to act contrary to his Perswasion : just as if a Man shou'd Break open his Neighbour's House, and Steal his Goods ; and, after all, shou'd Plead Not Guilty ; because he was not Conscious to himself, that to do either, was Burglary or Felony. Is not he that holds and publishes False Doctrines an *Heretick* ? Or, that Divides from a Church, with which he may lawfully Communicate, a *Schismatick* ? Because he does not think the One is *Heresy*, and the Other *Schism* ? If a Man is Conscious to himself that Covetousness is not Idolatry ; is it not therefore Idolatry ? Will Men's Opinions alter the Natures of Things ; and make that not to be a Vice or a Vertue which is so ? The Truth on't is ; An Error in the Judgment will never change the Nature of any Habit or Action ; but that which is Vicious will be so still, notwithstanding a contrary Opinion : tho' if the Error be not Wilful, it will not be Imputed.

I have hitherto suppos'd that All *Dissenters* look upon the Worship of God, as Practic'd in our Church, to be Unlawful, as being Clogg'd and Deprav'd with *Papish* Ceremonies and Superstition : This they continually Complain of, and think themselves Oblig'd to Separate from us, till we Reform and Model our Liturgy, after the Purity and Simplicity of the Gospel. But some of 'em, of late, have discover'd a Secret, never so much as Dreamt of by their Fore-fathers ; by vertue of which, they can Reconcile their *Conscience* to their *Interest*. And that is, by the Distin-

* *Rights of the Protestants Dissenters*, pag. 48.

tion of *Occasional* and *Stated* Communion. For 'tis said, the *Occasional* Conformist does not think Communion with us *sometimes* to be Unlawful. Why does he not then Conform *always*, since he's Commanded so to do by a Lawful Authority, which he's bound in Conscience to Obey, in Lawful things? No; to conform *always*, or *Statedly*, is a Sin, tho' to do it *sometimes*, or *Occasionally*, is not. Because, tho' the Worship of God in the *Church of England*, is not simply and in it self Unlawful; yet it is less Pure, and less Agreeable to the Word of God; and therefore to join in it *always* wou'd be a Sin, where *Purer Ordinances*, as they Love to Speak, may be Enjoy'd. Which Reasoning must be founded upon this Principle, that every One must Worship God in the Best * and Purest manner he can; and this as the fore-mention'd *Shuffling* Author says, is one of the main Foundations on which a Separation is built. This being Granted; it follows, That to Worship God in a less Pure way, when a better may be had, must be Unlawful; because 'tis always our Duty to Offer unto God, the Best and most Reasonable Sacrifice. We must not Pretend, according to the foresaid Principle, to Offer any thing, which we think will be Less acceptable to him; because God always requires and expects the Best of our Services. And therefore if a *Form of Prayer*, for Instance, be not so acceptable to God, as a *Conciv'd* or *Extemporary* One, we must not, for that reason, Presume to Address our selves to him in the former; because we must not, at any time, take upon us to Worship God in a way, which our *Conscience* tells us is not so Agreeable to him.

I think it is by this time pretty Evident, that the *Occasional* Communicant acts against his *Judgment* or *Conscience*, whether he Believes our Worship to be Unlawful, or not. For, if he Believes it to be Unlawful, and yet joins in it; the Matter is out of Dispute: And if he Believes it to be Lawful, but less Pure; he acts against his *Conscience* in Conforming: because, tho' it be Lawful in it self; yet as to *Him* it is Unlawful, who Believes it not to be so Pure, nor so Agreeable to the Word of God, as another way: For, according to his Principle before laid down, it is Unlawful, and therefore against One's *Conscience*, to Worship God in that way, which is less Pure; add consequently not so acceptable to him.

Now he that acts against his *Conscience* in Matters of Religion, for the sake of Gain. He that looks Two ways, and Divides betwixt God and this World, and dares Affront the One to get an Interest in the Other; that Doubles and Prevaricates with his *Duty* and his *Conscience*, if such a One be not an *Hypocrite*; then is the Name a meer empty Sound, and there is no such thing as *Hypocrisy* in the World.

And here perhaps it may be expected I shou'd make some Apology for not Speaking to the Occasion; or at least force my Subject to say something to it. All that I shall offer in Excuse is, That Topicks of this Nature are so Common and so well Understood, that they are now become

* *Ibid.* pag. 6.

less Needful. That the Corruptions here Complain'd of are so Pernicious and so Spreading, that the Compassionate, but Partial Enquirer says, they helpt to Lead on the late Execrable Rebellion, which they did by Beguiling Unstable Souls, Unsettling Men's Mind, and Seducing them from their Loyalty, and the True Religion. And since they are grown to such a Height, even in our days, We are all of us, Magistrates and People, immediately Concern'd to Guard our selves against 'em, to Discountenance and Put a Stop to 'em: and to use our utmost Endeavour for the Prevention of such Designs, as have been once already carry'd on by them. And therefore I chose rather to direct your Thoughts to that, which is of so Intimate, and so great Importance to us all. However, that what has been said, may be of some use to us, I proceed, *Thirdly*.—

III. *Thirdly*, To Offer some Motives to Perswade Us to a Eree, Open, and Undisguis'd Behaviour; especially, in Matters of Religion. And here let us consider in the

First Place; That we are always in the presence of Almighty God, who is the Judge of all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions. For though *Heaven is his Throne, and the Earth his Footstool*; though He is in some Places more than others, by the more immediate Communications of his Power, Goodness, and Justice; yet as to his Essence, and Providence, He is confin'd to no Bounds, He is Excluded from no Place. *The Darknesse and Light to Him are both alike; and all things are Naked and Open to the Eyes of him, with whom we have to do.* He is the Searcher of all Hearts, and Thoroughly Acquainted with the Inmost Recesses, and most Secret Motions of our Souls. However therefore we may Disguise our Corrupt Designs, by False Colours, and Plausible Pretences, to Deceive, or Ensnare our Brother, yet it is impossible to Conceal our selves from Him, who is *immediately Present to all our Thoughts, and Actions; He is about our Bed, and about our Path, and spies out all our Ways*: Who will Approve or Condemn us for them; not as they have been Successful in carrying on our secular Designs; but as they are Agreeable to his Will, and as they come up to the Standard of Reason, Justice, and Truth. A Man by an Artful Disguise, may make a Tolerable Appearance in the World, and Insinuate himself into the Credit, and Interest of Men, and thereby Compass his Designs upon them: But we must not Judge of our own selves, by the Reputation and Success we gain in this World, but by the Approbation of Him, who is a God of Infinite Knowledge and Wisdom, and cannot be Deceiv'd: of the most Impartial, Unbias'd Justice, and therefore the Judgment He passes on us, will be according to the Exactest Measures of Justice and Truth.

But let us Consider,
Secondly, That, however we may Pass our Disguises and False Colours upon the World; however by *Guile and Hypocrisy* we may work our selves into the Esteem of Men, yet let us Remember that the Delusion cannot last long; that in the Day of Judgment a New Scene will be Opened, wherein every thing will appear at it is; the superficial Glosses and Beauti-

ties

ties will Vanish, and the Secrets of all Hearts will be Disclos'd. All our Doublings, and Shiftings, and Evasions, will *then* be Manifest: *Then* will it be known what little Arts and Tricks, we have made use of, to Stifle our Consciences, to Decline our Duty, or Reconcile it with the Interests, Honours, and Pleasures, of this World. And *then* with what Confusion of Face shall we Appear, when it will be Evident to all that Dreadful Assembly, which shall Behold us, that all our Care and Cunning have been employ'd in miserably Deluding our selves at the last. That we have Prostituted our Religion and our Conscience to our Interests. That we have Betray'd the One, and Wounded the Other, to carry on our Selfish and Sordid Designs. And if this shou'd be the Unhappy Condition of any of us, we shall *then*, to our Everlasting Shame, sadly Experience, that we are Infinite Losers by the little Advantages we have gain'd here; and that when we thought we had shewn our selves the greatest Masters of Policy and Wit, we have only taken the surest Methods of Cheating and Undoing our selves.

Thirdly, Let us consider what a Base and Ungenerous thing *Hypocrisy* is. It is beneath a Man of Honour and Integrity to be always Shifting, and Doubling, and Fitting up himself for the Humours of all Companies, and the Interests and Designs of every Party. A Good and Honest Man will be *always*, and in *all* Places, the *Same*: Vice, Deformity, and Corruption, are forc'd to betake themselves to Disguises and False Colours, lest they shou'd become the Contempt and Hatred of the World. How little, how contemptible a Notion have the Generality of Mankind for such a One, who dares not tell the Truth and Abide by it? Who is Afraid to Discover his Principles, or his Religion, when they are openly attack'd, and almost run down, by a Powerful Faction? Who can Quit them, without his Honour, and all his Obligations, to serve a present Turn, or gain the Favour of a prevailing Party? Nay, He is generally so Despicable, that he is seldom in any Trust or Confidence with *them*, he becomes a Prose-cutee to. To Conclude—

Let us all Possess our Selves with a due Sense of God's being Present to all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions; that He will bring them all to a Strict and Impartial Judgment before Men and Angels: Let us use our utmost Endeavours to Understand our Religion, and our Principles; and when as we have any Regard for our Integrity, Honour, and the Truth we Profess, let us freely and constantly Own and Avow them; Resolutely and Stedfastly Maintain them; without Wavering; without Disguising, or Changing them, to our Live's end.

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